Question: What impact did the New Teacher Academy (NTA) in August 2009 have on its teacher participants 3 months later when they were teaching in the classroom?

Response

More than 500 teachers who were newly hired in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and who attended the district's NTA training in August 2009 were sent an online survey in November 2009. The survey included questions about the impact NTA had on their knowledge about instructional expectations; available teaching resources; technology access and use (e.g., laptop computers, district-provided electronic resources); lesson plan development; student work assessment; effective classroom setup; student data access and use; and knowledge about key district initiatives. In addition, teachers were asked to provide their opinions about the most and least helpful aspects of NTA, and they were asked about areas in which they needed further training and support. The primary finding from the survey indicated that teachers' responses about NTA 2009 were positive overall. Most teachers agreed that NTA helped increase their knowledge about principles of learning (POL; Institute for Learning, 2007) and positive behavior strategies to use in the classroom. In addition, teachers agreed that time spent on campus was very useful. However, compared with other topics rated by teachers, fewer teachers agreed that NTA increased their knowledge about how to assess student learning, how to access and use student data, and how to develop effective lesson plans. In addition, experienced teachers commented that they would have preferred training sessions different from those received by teachers new to the profession.

Survey Respondents

Of the 602 e-mails sent to staff attending NTA 2009, 43% ($n = 262$) teachers answered the survey online within a 2-week response period, providing a 95% confidence level for results that were reliable within plus or minus 5 percentage points. NTA 2009 participants and survey respondents had some similar characteristics (see Table 1 on the following page). Of the survey respondents, 50% were at the elementary level, 41% were in their first year of teaching, and 46% had taught for 4 or more years. Forty-eight percent of elementary school teacher survey respondents were new to the profession, as compared with 37% of middle and 32% of high school teachers.

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Table 1. Characteristics of New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Participants
and Survey Respondents

Characteristic	% NTA 2009 participants	% NTA 2009 survey respondents
School level		
Elementary	49	50
Middle	25	26
High	26	24
Hire date		
Fall 2009	75	49
Spring 2009	10	35
Fall 2008 or earlier	15	16
Years of professional experience		
1st year	49	41
2nd year	10	10
3rd year	5	3
4th or 5th year	11	10
6th to 10th year	11	16
More than 10 years	14	20

Source. NTA 2009 attendance and survey records

Staff responding to the survey described the subject area(s) in which they provided instruction. The majority of respondents reported they provided instruction in core subject areas, such as reading or English language arts (ELA) (45%), mathematics (44%), science (41%), and social studies (36%). Other subject areas of instruction reported were bilingual (BE)/English as a second language (ESL) (21%), special education (16%), fine arts (12%), physical education (PE) (6%), counseling (6%), career and technology (CTE) (2%), foreign languages (2%), and library resources (1%).

When asked about which NTA 2009 curriculum subject area session(s) they attended, survey respondents' answers mirrored their answers about areas of instruction: reading/ELA (46%), mathematics (43%), science (39%), social studies (22%), BE/ESL (16%), special education (13%), fine arts (9%), counseling (6%), PE(3%), CTE (3%), foreign languages (2%), and library resources (1%).

Instructional Expectations, Policies, and Resources

Table 2 on the following page shows the majority of survey respondents agreed their participation in NTA helped them increase their knowledge about what they were expected to teach students (62%), how to apply content-specific instructional strategies (64%), and AISD's technology acceptable use policy (74%). However, less than half of respondents agreed that they increased their knowledge about AISD's grading policy (46%) and use of benchmark testing (42%) as a result of NTA.

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Table 2. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge About Instructional Expectations and Strategies, Policies, and Benchmark Testing

As a result of participating in the AISD New Teacher Academy 2009, I increased my knowledge of…	% Agree or strongly agree	% Neutral	% Disagree or strongly disagree
What I am expected to teach my students.			
Elementary	74	14	12
Middle	49	41	10
High	56	29	15
All	62	26	12
How to apply content-specific instructional strategies.			
Elementary	74	13	13
Middle	52	35	13
High	59	26	15
All	64	23	13
AISD acceptable use policy.			
Elementary	80	15	5
Middle	65	24	11
High	79	13	8
All	74	18	8
AISD grading policy.			
Elementary	48	26	26
Middle	41	32	27
High	48	25	27
All	46	27	27
AISD use of benchmark testing.			
Elementary	47	30	23
Middle	41	29	30
High	36	33	31
All	42	31	27

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

Survey respondents who attended NTA 2009 also provided feedback about whether NTA increased their knowledge about how they would be evaluated at work. School districts are required to provide information to teachers about the professional development and appraisal system (PDAS) used by the district to provide annual appraisals. A portion of the NTA schedule was devoted to this. A majority of survey respondents (82%) agreed that NTA increased their knowledge about this topic.

NTA also provided information to teachers about support and resources available to staff. NTA attendees were asked if NTA increased their knowledge about available supports to help them be successful in the classroom, and 67% of survey respondents agreed. Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether NTA helped them increase their knowledge about specific resources. Table 3 on the following page summarizes the responses given. The greatest percentages of respondents agreed that NTA helped them increase their knowledge about instructional planning guides (IPGs) (75%), technology (64%), AISD website (63%), E-campus (61%), and mentors (60%). Lesser percentages of teachers responding to the survey agreed that NTA increased their knowledge about materials (58%), books (54%), library (53%), human resources (52%), and payroll (47%). Differences in responses by school level are presented in Appendix Table 1.

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Table 3. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge
About Available Resources

As a result of participating in the AISD New Teacher Academy 2009, I have increased my knowledge of resources available to me, such as…	% Agree or strongly agree	% Neutral	% Disagree or strongly disagree
Instructional planning guides (IPGs)	75	16	9
Technology	64	22	14
AISD website	63	23	14
E-campus	61	21	18
Mentors	60	25	15
Materials	58	23	19
Books	54	23	23
Library	53	29	18
Human resources	52	31	17
Payroll	47	32	21

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

Technology

Table 4 shows that while 62% of teacher respondents agreed they had access to their district-provided laptop computer during NTA, only 54% indicated they used the laptop during NTA. Most (89%) agreed they had received a district-provided USB flash drive loaded with district resource information, but only 54% indicated the information was useful, and 48% reported they had used this information. Responses were mixed when asked whether such information should be provided on a district website (40% agree, 41% neutral, 19% disagree).

Table 4. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge About Technology
Access and Use During NTA

Use of technology during AISD NTA 2009	% Agree or strongly agree	% Neutral	% Disagree or strongly disagree
I had access to my laptop computer during NTA.	62	6	32
I used my laptop computer during NTA.	54	7	39
I received a USB key (flash drive) during NTA.	89	1	10
The information on the USB key (flash drive) that I received during NTA was useful.	54	27	19
I have used the information provided on the USB key (flash drive) that I had received during NTA.	48	18	34
New teachers should receive the information that was provided on the USB key (flash drive) on a district website or 'wiki' instead.	40	41	19

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

Lesson Plans

Teachers were asked about their development and use of lesson plans since NTA. Table 5 on the following page summarizes results from the survey. Most respondents agreed they had been working on lesson plans since August (80%), and they felt prepared to write effective lesson plans (82%). However, only 43% of all respondents agreed that NTA increased their knowledge about how to develop lesson plans.

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Table 5. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge About Lesson Plans

Lesson plans	% Agree or strongly agree	% Neutral	% Disagree or strongly disagree
As a result of NTA, I have increased my knowledge of how to develop effective lesson plans.			
Elementary	51	19	30
Middle	32	34	34
High	40	28	32
All	43	25	32
Since August, I have worked on developing effective lesson plans at my campus.			
Elementary	82	6	12
Middle	83	15	2
High	75	18	7
All	80	15	5
I feel prepared to write effective lesson plans.			
Elementary	81	14	5
Middle	83	17	0
High	84	16	0
All	82	15	3

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

Evaluating Student Work and Using Student Data

Teachers were asked whether NTA helped increase their knowledge about how to assess student work (Table 6). Although 50% of teachers indicated they were able to assess student work effectively, 30% responded neutrally, and 20% disagreed. When asked about developing formative student assessments, 50% agreed NTA helped them do this, 30% were neutral, and 20% disagreed. Fifty-two percent agreed that NTA increased their knowledge about how to use student assessment results to adjust instruction, while 30% answered neutrally and 20% disagreed.

Table 6. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge About Assessing Student Work and Using Student Assessment Data

As a result of participating in the AISD New Teacher Academy 2009, I have increased my knowledge of…	Agree or strongly agree %	Neutral %	Disagree or strongly disagree %
How to assess student work.			
Elementary	56	26	18
Middle	37	40	23
High	52	27	21
All	50	30	20
How to develop formative student assessments.			
Elementary	52	28	20
Middle	44	35	21
High	57	29	14
All	50	30	20
How to interpret and use student assessment results to adjust instruction.			
Elementary	57	28	15
Middle	42	35	23
High	53	29	18
All	52	30	18

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

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Table 7 summarizes teachers' responses to questions about accessing and using student data through two of the district's student data systems: AISD Instructional Management System (AIMS) (student assessment data) and Gradespeed (student attendance and grades data). Results showed about one-third to two-fifths of respondents agreed that NTA increased their knowledge about how to access and use these data systems.

Table 7. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge About Accessing and Using Student Data From AIMS and Gradespeed

As a result of participating in AISD's New Teacher Academy, I increased my knowledge of…	Agree or strongly agree %	Neutral %	Disagree or strongly disagree %
How to access student data effectively using AIMS.	40	19	41
How to access student data effectively using Gradespeed.	42	18	40
How to use student data effectively using AIMS.	36	20	44
How to use student data effectively using Gradespeed.	39	20	41

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

District Initiatives

Table 8 shows the majority of teachers agreed that NTA increased their knowledge about the district's POL criteria (73%) and how to use them in the classroom (69%). Greater percentages of elementary school teachers than of teachers at other school levels agreed NTA helped them achieve a better understanding about POL criteria and about how to use them in the classroom. When asked about whether NTA helped them achieve a better understanding about how to affect student behavior using positive behavior support (PBS; AISD, 2008) strategies, the majority of teachers (70%) agreed. Campus implementation of PBS was confirmed by 76% of teachers responding that their campus was using PBS strategies and processes.

Table 8. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge About Principles of Learning (POL) and Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

As a result of participating in the AISD New Teacher Academy 2009, I increased my knowledge of…	Agree or strongly agree %	Neutral %	Disagree or strongly disagree %
The POL criteria.			
Elementary	78	14	8
Middle	70	20	10
High	65	22	12
All	73	17	10
How to use POL criteria in my classroom.			
Elementary	76	16	8
Middle	59	26	15
High	65	23	12
All	69	20	11
How to impact student behavior using PBS strategies and processes.			
Elementary	72	18	10
Middle	70	26	4
High	70	18	12
All	70	21	9

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

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Time Spent on Campus

Teachers were asked to rate the usefulness of the NTA time periods spent on their assigned campuses. As shown in Table 9, most respondents reported that all aspects of the time spent on campus during NTA were useful (88%). Meeting with other campus staff (88%); accessing classrooms (84%); receiving a building orientation (82%); and meeting with specific staff (librarian 77%, mentor teacher 71%) also were useful. Unfortunately, 24% reported they did not meet with their mentor teacher, while 5% did so and found it not very useful.

Table 9. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge About the Usefulness of Time Spent on Campuses During NTA

Rate the usefulness of the NTA campus activity described in each of the following statements.	Somewhat or very useful %	Not very useful %	Did not happen %
Meeting with other campus staff (e.g., team of teachers, others).	88	6	6
All of the time spent on campus during NTA.	88	9	3
Accessing my classroom and setting up.	84	4	12
Receiving an orientation to the campus building and rooms.	82	5	13
Meeting with the librarian on my campus.	77	9	14
Meeting with my mentor teacher.	71	5	24

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

Professional Development Needs of New Teachers

Teachers were asked to select areas in which they needed support or training. Table 10 on the following page shows that teachers most frequently wanted support or training in using technology in the classroom (50%), differentiating instruction for English language learner (ELL) students (44%), differentiating instruction for students receiving special education services (42%), implementing PBS and using effective classroom management techniques (38%), and differentiating instruction for gifted students (37%). Topics selected most often by elementary teachers were using technology (42%) and differentiating instruction for ELLs (38%). Topics selected most often by middle school teachers were implementing PBS and classroom management techniques (38%), using technology (34%), and differentiating instruction for students receiving special education services (34%). Topics selected most often by high school teachers were using technology (35%) and differentiating instruction for students receiving special education services (34%).

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Table 10. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Areas of Need for Further Support and Training

Select any of the topics in which you would like to receive more support or possible training.	% Elementary	% Middle	% High	% All
Using technology in the classroom	42	34	35	50
Differentiating instruction for English language learner students	38	29	32	44
Differentiating instruction for students receiving special education services	31	34	34	42
Implementing PBS and using effective classroom management techniques	27	38	26	38
Differentiating instruction for gifted students	31	31	24	37
Developing and writing lesson plans	27	20	19	30
Finding and using other district resources (e.g., human resources, payroll, benefits, etc.)	18	25	26	29
Finding and using web or internet resources	20	18	23	25
Finding and using library resources	9	3	8	10

Source. NTA 2009 survey records

Most and Least Helpful Components of NTA 2009

Teachers were asked to describe aspects of NTA that were most helpful to them. Out of 140 comments, the components mentioned most frequently by teachers responding were the opportunity to meet, share, and discuss experiences with other teachers; the time spent on their campuses; access to technology and district data systems; discussions about instruction, classroom strategies, and assessment; and getting to know AISD-specific policies and procedures. Other components mentioned were POL; IPGs; PBS; the teacher appraisal process (i.e., PDAS); and visiting a master teacher's classroom.

However, when asked to describe NTA components that were least helpful to teachers (128 comments submitted), the following issue was raised most often: experienced teachers who were new to or returning to AISD did not feel their time was used efficiently because much of the NTA content was for teachers new to the profession. Other issues raised frequently by teachers included not having enough time on campus, needing more time for learning technology and district data systems, and not enough time for lesson planning. In addition, some of the components (e.g., PDAS, PBS, and POL) cited by some teachers as most helpful were considered least helpful by other teachers.

Summary and Recommendations

Overall, teachers' responses about NTA 2009 were positive. However, several areas emerged in which improvements could be made in planning for next year, including the following:

- Differentiate NTA based on teachers' years of teaching experience. Because AISD hires teachers who are experienced as well as those new to the profession, NTA planners should consider having different tracks for training based on teachers' experience. Consideration also should be given to providing ongoing training modules during the year to extend topics covered briefly during NTA.
- Provide teachers with more time on their campus for networking with teachers and for setting up their classroom.

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- Provide teachers help with and time to work on developing effective lesson plans.
- Ensure that new teachers use their district-provided laptop computers during NTA.
- Provide teachers with more guidance and assistance in accessing and using student data. In addition, teachers need more help in using student assessment data to adjust instruction. More time spent understanding and using district technology and student data systems could help in these areas, especially if training is ongoing during the first month of school.
- Provide guidance to teachers about differentiated instruction tied to students' learning needs.
- Provide teachers with more information about district policies, including grading and use of benchmark testing.
- Provide more time for teachers to work with their school-, grade-, or subject-specific assignment areas. One way to provide more time for specific training would be to shorten the time spent on large, general presentations and on topics such as POL, PDAS, and PBS. Some of these topics could be addressed in ongoing district professional development sessions throughout the year.

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APPENDIX
Table 1. New Teacher Academy (NTA) 2009 Respondents' Knowledge About
Available Resources

As a result of participating in the AISD New Teacher Academy 2009, I have increased my knowledge of resources available to me, such as…	% Agree or strongly agree	% Neutral	% Disagree or strongly disagree
Books			
Elementary	65	18	17
Middle	41	30	29
High	47	24	29
All	54	23	23
Materials			
Elementary	67	19	14
Middle	49	30	21
High	53	21	26
All	58	23	19
Technology			
Elementary	70	17	13
Middle	57	31	12
High	64	22	14
All	64	22	14
Mentors			
Elementary	65	21	14
Middle	53	32	15
High	63	22	15
All	60	25	15
Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs)			
Elementary	83	11	6
Middle	66	21	13
High	70	20	10
All	75	16	9
E-campus			
Elementary	79	11	10
Middle	41	31	28
High	51	29	20
All	61	21	18
AISD website			
Elementary	75	15	10
Middle	51	31	18
High	58	27	15
All	63	23	14
Library			
Elementary	59	26	15
Middle	38	39	23
High	59	24	17
All	53	29	18
Human resources			
Elementary	58	28	14
Middle	41	36	23
High	58	27	15
All	52	31	17
Payroll			
Elementary	54	28	18
Middle	35	39	26
High	51	32	17
All	47	32	21

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